



Flinders Institute for Housing,  
Urban and Regional Research



# Our Homes, Our Communities:

## The Aspirations and Expectations of Older People in South Australia



Prof Andrew Beer, Dr Debbie Faulkner, Dr Emma Baker,  
Dr Selina Tually, Dr Peta Raftery and Mrs Cecile Cutler  
(Flinders Institute for Housing, Urban and Regional Research)

For  
**ECH Inc**  
**May 2009**



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# Executive Summary

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This report brings together the outcomes of a comprehensive program of research into the housing needs and aspirations of older South Australians. This work extended over the period 2006 to 2008 and represents the most comprehensive analysis of the housing desires and conditions of older South Australians currently available. Indeed, it has placed South Australia at the forefront of housing and ageing research nationally.

The research used a mixed method approach that included focus groups across Adelaide and country South Australia, a large scale quantitative survey, and in depth interviews.

The research concludes that current market trends in the provision of housing for older people often fit poorly with the needs and aspirations voiced by older South Australians. When asked, the overwhelming majority of older South Australians desire housing:

- that is located within the broader community, rather than being confined to estates which restrict interaction with society as a whole;
- rooted in the neighbourhood and the community in which they have spent their lives. While the 'romance' of a seachange or treechange is attractive to some, a far higher proportion look to build upon their community links and stay engaged with friends, neighbours and family members;
- which is affordable and provides an opportunity to live well, even if a person's resources are modest;
- that is appropriately designed in that the housing provides a sense of internal space, while providing both sufficient bedrooms and scope for hobbies and other activities;
- that provides security, but also enables a sense of neighbourliness and encourages social interaction;
- that is accessible to public transport, and particularly general practitioners, post offices, shops and hairdressers;
- that is supported by appropriate social services which will enable them to live independently for as long as possible.

The research does not simply highlight a set of 'motherhood statements' around housing for older people. Instead it shows that the majority of older South Australians do not aspire to the housing found in the majority of retirement villages. It also emphasises how current funding models for aged housing often leave vulnerable people exposed and confused and may serve as an impediment to the movement to more appropriate housing.

The work reported here also highlights the high level of risk confronting many older South Australians as the overwhelming majority of older people reported that they held very modest assets. Some 53 per cent of those we surveyed aged 55 to 64 had assets – excluding the value of any homes they owned - valued at less than \$200,000; while 71 per cent of the 65 to 74 year group had assets worth less than \$200,000; and, fully 82 per cent of those aged over 75 years reported assets below this threshold. Critically, those older South Australians who do not own a home are therefore unlikely to have significant other assets and would have limited opportunities to purchase purpose built aged housing or purchase additional support services in older age. In addition, those older South Australians who own a home are dependent upon this single asset class and may be reluctant to move to more appropriate housing because of the perception of a risk to their asset.

Many older people attracted to purpose built aged housing are deterred by the prospect of living in a large retirement village. A significant percentage of older South Australians expressed a preference for purpose built aged housing that was provided in a community setting, usually individual units in small clusters of up to ten dwellings that would provide social support but not isolate the older population from the community at large. Our research found that 37 per cent of older South Australians would prefer to live in homes in clusters of ten or fewer dwellings, while 62 per cent considered clusters of fewer than 20 dwellings to be ideal. This type of housing, if both affordable and built to a high standard, was seen to offer the best of all worlds: good quality housing, minimal or zero maintenance obligations, social connectedness with both peers and the broader community; and the capacity to remain within the neighbourhood or community with which they are familiar.

There are significant differences across South Australia in the housing needs and expectations of older people. Importantly, higher income people living in the eastern suburbs of Adelaide reported very high levels of satisfaction with their housing and good levels of access to public transport and services. By contrast, older people in outer suburbs had poor access to services and public transport and were more likely to remain in often inappropriate housing because of the absence of alternatives. This set of outcomes represents a significant range of challenges for governments and the housing industry and may best be resolved by working in partnership. At the same time, older residents in country South Australia reported a mixed set of outcomes, and in many instances strong community linkages have resulted in successful 'ageing in place'.

The research summarized here suggests that 'ideal' developments of purpose built aged housing would have the following characteristics. They would:

- contain groups of ten or fewer single storey dwellings that, in the main, have two bedrooms. Each development would also include some three bedroom units for persons who seek a tenure arrangement similar to outright ownership, as well as one bedroom units for the rental market as the data suggests those with lower assets are more willing to accept a single bedroom home;
- be located throughout metropolitan and regional areas so that people have the opportunity to move to purpose built aged housing that is part of their neighbourhood;

- provide limited services, focussing on maintenance of the property and grounds, and personal security. They should not provide a swimming pool or similar sporting facilities because, while the prospect of such services are attractive to Baby Boomers, they are not attractive to prospective older purchasers nor current occupants of purpose built aged housing;
- assist, and be seen to assist, people to maintain an independent lifestyle. The site would also be close to public transport, shops and other facilities. It is important that the site's location facilitate access to health services;
- be aimed at older people generally – but mindful of the needs of lower income persons in particular – and would offer a range of tenure and pricing arrangements including rental, outright purchase, a 'donation model' and other variants. The data from this program of research shows that the majority of older South Australians are willing to sell their home in order to secure purpose built aged housing and importantly, those aged 55-64 have greater assets than earlier generations had at the same stage in their life cycle. This is likely to translate into greater purchasing power in the housing market;
- pay attention to the issue of access to care services, which is a critical factor in the decision of many who move to purpose built aged housing;
- should involve an established participant in the industry, with a good reputation, and one which commands a perception of financial stability.

Developments should focus on persons in and around their early to mid 70s as they are the group most receptive to the idea of purpose built aged housing and perhaps best positioned to take up these opportunities.

Serious issues emerged from the study of the housing of older South Australians. The research found that low income private tenants are very vulnerable within the housing market and have few, if any, options for moving to appropriate accommodation, short of residential care. Many older people with few resources are confronted by very limited options with respect to housing and access to services. A substantial number of people within the study were dependent on public rental housing, and while satisfied with this tenure, access to this form of housing is increasingly difficult. In the future, older people may find entry into this tenure even more difficult. Private rental housing is an expensive and challenging housing option for many older people and one which is marked by insecure occupation, and the risk of frequent forced moves.

The research suggests that there is a relatively narrow 'window of opportunity' within which older people are willing to consider moving to more appropriate housing. Such moves appear to have a positive impact on both the quality and quantity of life in older age and there are strong grounds for public policy that encourages such transitions.

# 1. Introduction

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Australia's population is ageing rapidly and over the last decade there has been an escalating awareness of the potential impact of this substantial demographic change (Productivity Commission 2005; Department of Treasury 2002; 2007).



The ageing population presents significant challenges for Australian society in a whole range of areas such as workforce participation, public sector expenditures, the demand for health and community services, and in the supply of an appropriate housing stock. These pressing demands are more acute in South Australia than in the nation as a whole because the State's population is ageing more rapidly than in other jurisdictions. It is important, therefore, to have an accurate picture of both the current provision of housing for older South Australians and the set of housing and community service aspirations they hold.

Housing is essential to well-being, particularly for older people, and as people age the home and its suitability becomes a more central focus of life. As the provision of housing is a long term prospect and as the ageing of the population will have a considerable influence on the housing stock required, it is essential to gather information on an ongoing basis about the aspirations and expectations of people in terms of their housing needs and associated services as they age.

Like all age groups, the older population is not homogeneous. They have different lifetime experiences, characteristics, abilities, expectations, desires, needs and behaviour. This is likely to become increasingly relevant as the so called 'Baby Boomers' move into the older age groups. Consequently there are likely to be a wide range of views about retirement housing as people age, and a wide array of factors that are likely to make housing more suitable. It is therefore important that we have an understanding of the thoughts, ideas and plans of the people about to enter the older age groups as well as the experiences, needs and aspirations of older people who may already have planned their housing to accommodate their ageing needs, or may now be confronting issues about their housing and housing options.

The research presented here is a first step in the development of a more comprehensive evidence base around housing and ageing in South Australia and nationally. This report brings together the outcomes of a comprehensive program of research into the housing needs and aspirations of older South Australians. This work extended over the period 2006 to 2008 and represents the most comprehensive analysis of the housing desires and circumstances of older South Australians currently available. Indeed, it has placed South Australia at the forefront of housing and ageing research nationally. The project was funded by ECH Inc (ECH) as part of its commitment to better understanding the housing needs of older South Australians and developing more appropriate housing models for low and modest income households.

The material summarized in this report is drawn from a substantial program of research completed between 2006 and 2008. The research has included:

- a Stage One comprised of seven focus groups with between 8 and 20 older people in each group. The focus groups were undertaken across metropolitan and non-metropolitan South Australia, in locations including Renmark, Marion, the Western Suburbs, the Eastern Suburbs and Victor Harbor. The focus groups were structured by age, with three groups studied: those aged 55 to 64; persons aged 65 to 74; and the population over 75 years of age;
- a Stage Two consisting of 1200 telephone interviews with older persons. A formal questionnaire via a Computer Aided Telephone Interview (CATI) with a range of questions asked with respect to the demography of the respondent households, their housing preferences, their use of services and their plans for the future;
- a Stage Three comprised of 30 in-depth interviews, as well as focus groups with persons aged over 70 years. This phase of the research teased out the tradeoffs made by individuals in choosing accommodation, and sought to understand how individuals balance accessibility, dwelling design, proximity to friends and relatives, as well as tenure arrangements when considering their housing.

This publication seeks to summarise the key findings and flag the issues that should concern governments, the housing industry, aged service providers and society as a whole. The report is organised around four themes:

- The Experience of Home in Later Life;
- The Housing Stock;
- Housing and Services; and,
- Housing Models and Aspirations.

Each of these themes is discussed in turn but it is important to acknowledge that there are considerable overlaps between themes as the homes and communities within which older Australians live are complex and multi-layered. There is often no single solution or set of aspirations, but there are identifiable trends and this publication seeks to shed light on the key concerns, issues and preferences of older people in South Australia at the beginning of the 21st Century.

## 2. The Experience of Home in Later Life

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In the past older Australians were seen to have a very conservative approach to home and their housing: older age was considered to be a time of withdrawal from mainstream society, of living on limited means and of staying within the family home where children had been raised. In the 21st Century reality is at odds with these perceptions, and increasingly older South Australians view their housing in ways unknown in the past. They also live their lives in ways that were unknown a generation previously, though home remains a touchstone in their lives and an important determinant of their quality of life.



The experience of home in later life is changing because attitudes and circumstances are changing at the level of individuals, while at the same time demographic change means that both the number and percentage of older persons within the population is increasing at an unprecedented rate. In part, this is a reflection of increased life expectancy, but more fundamentally it is a product of the ageing of the 'Baby Boomer' generation (ABS 2003; Borowski and McDonald 2007). The processes and outcomes associated with the ageing of the Baby Boomers are more evident in South Australia than elsewhere in Australia, because the State has the oldest population on mainland Australia. Importantly, then, the experience of home in older age is changing as greater numbers of people share that experience and community and governmental attitudes to the aged population are reshaped. This will be an evolving story over the coming decades and one which needs to be informed by the types of analyses presented here.

### **The Housing Older South Australians Seek**

Many older South Australians are looking for housing in retirement and older age that is of a higher standard – in terms of space and quality – than that currently offered by many retirement villages and specialist providers of retirement living options. From the 1950s to the 1980s the Australian Government sponsored the expansion of affordable housing for older people in the form of Independent Living Units (ILUs) but this relatively modest accommodation is no longer seen as meeting the needs of older people.

***The attitudes, values and living strategies of older South Australians are changing*** as summarized in this comment from one participant in the research:

...we are a different demographic – my peers are approaching retirement with different attitudes and health. We are the first generation willing to look and make plans for the lifestyle we want...we are all approaching this in a positive way – this is a chance to approach change in a good way. Housing is just ‘bricks and mortar’ now, it was not so in the past. (Beer, Faulkner and Baker 2006, p.6).

The nature of retirement and older age is changing as the ‘Baby Boomer’ generation enters older age. But importantly there has been a fracturing of attitudes to housing and the home as changing health, financial circumstances, life experiences and household structures have resulted in a diversity of attitudes to home.

The body of research drawn together here and presented in the research reports finds that the population of older South Australians has a number of characteristics which both distinguish them from the broader population and shape their experience of housing and home. Our research (Faulkner, Beer and Cutler 2007; Raftery, Faulkner and Beer 2008) found that:

- being married is the most common form of marital status for people aged 55 to 74 years, while being widowed is most common among people aged 75 years or more. Also, men are more likely to be married than women;
- primary or secondary schooling is most commonly the highest level of education completed;
- virtually all people aged 75 years or more are retired, as are just over 85 per cent of women aged 65 to 74 years;
- around half of the people still working are employed on a permanent or ongoing basis and approximately one third are self-employed;
- household income decreases with age, with over half of those aged 55 to 64 having incomes of more than \$41,600, while over two thirds of people aged 75 years or more have incomes of less than \$25,999 and males report higher incomes than females. The number of older people surviving on \$13,000 or less increased with age from 11.1 per cent of the sample at ages 55-64 to 13.1 and 21.6 per cent of those aged 65-74 and 75 years and over respectively;
- marital status appears to have a significant impact on income, with three quarters of widowers, approximately 60 per cent of people who are separated and more than half of divorcees having incomes of \$25,999 or less. In comparison, only one third of people who are married report this level of income;
- the pension is by far the most common income source for respondents who have already retired, whereas wages and salary form the main source of income for those who remain attached to the workforce;
- most older people reported that they owned very modest assets. Some 53 per cent of those we surveyed aged 55 to 64 had assets – excluding the value of any homes they owned - valued at less than \$200,000; 71 per cent of the 65 to 74 year group had assets worth less than \$200,000; and, fully 82 per cent of those aged over 75 years reported assets below this threshold.

- critically, those older South Australians who do not own a home are unlikely to have significant other assets and would have limited opportunity to purchase purpose built aged housing;
- the population of older persons with significant assets was very much concentrated within the cohort aged 55 to 64 years. This 'leading edge' of the Baby Boom have the highest level of assets of all those surveyed, with over a quarter of this age group having assets valued at more than \$500,000. By comparison, approximately 15 per cent of 65 to 74 year olds and 10 per cent of people aged 75 years or more have assets of the same value. To a certain degree **we can conclude that the image of asset rich older South Australians is a myth;**
- females report having significantly fewer assets than males;
- people who are married or living with a partner have significantly more assets than those who are divorced;
- close to half of respondents aged 55 to 74 years live in couple only households, making it the most common living arrangement among this age group. People aged 75 years or more, more frequently live alone;
- separate houses are the most common type of dwelling for all age groups, although fewer people aged 75 years or older live in this type of dwelling than amongst the younger age group;
- most respondents in the large scale survey own their home outright;
- almost half of the people currently renting their home are tenants of public housing. The likelihood of a landlord being a public housing body increases with age, with 60 per cent of renters aged 75 years or more living in public housing;
- the size, quality and location of housing are the three most common reasons for having previously moved house, with size and quality also being most frequently cited as reasons for intended future moves; and,
- the level of housing mobility appears to decrease with age.

Each of these socio-demographic factors exerts an influence on housing and home amongst the older population. They determine how, when and why people move; they determine the housing options available to individuals; and they shape the type of housing sought. These diverse conditions shape the way home is socially constructed – given meaning, understood and negotiated on a day-to-day basis. Some of these significant narratives of home are discussed below.

### ***Home as a Lifestyle Base***

For a growing percentage of older South Australians, home has taken on a whole new meaning: housing is no longer seen as a container within which older people live the later years of their lives, instead it is the base from which they will go out and engage with their neighbourhood, their community and the world. This new set of attitudes was evident in a number of ways:

- many older South Australians reported that they were looking for retirement housing that was large enough to support their lifestyle when at home, but sufficiently contained that the housing could be locked up for three, six, nine or 12 months for travel across South Australia, the country or the world;

- older South Australians are looking for a retirement home that enables them to entertain friends, family and acquaintances. This means they want a home that has sufficient space to have visitors over, while still maintaining decent sized bedrooms and kitchens;
- there is a strong desire to live in localities that give older South Australians access to a range of social opportunities and which ensure that friendship and other networks are not limited to the village or cluster in which they live;
- where possible, older South Australians wish to remain within the communities where they spent their adult lives. This trend was evident in many places, and especially in the Riverland, where many older persons who had participated in one of our focus groups reported that they had built new homes as they entered retirement in older age to secure appropriate housing in the place that they loved;
- there is a growing commitment to environmental design features in the housing of older South Australians. Home was seen to be a place that contributed to the improvement of the environment with enhanced recycling opportunities, solar hot water systems, rain water tanks and photo voltaic cells. Where possible, they felt, the reliance on cars should be minimised;
- many older South Australians want their homes to enable their life, not be a burden on it. Maintenance, gardening and other matters should not impede their lifestyle aspirations. The desire to shed the burden of house maintenance is one of the fundamental drivers of the movement to purpose built aged accommodation, especially for women; and,
- there was a strongly held view by a majority of older South Australians who participated in this set of studies that ***funds should be left over for lifestyle after paying for their retirement housing***. Older South Australians do not want, and will not accept, retirement housing that consumes all their capital and strips them of options into the future. These funds are needed to finance travel, purchase health services and necessary amenities, provide money for entertainment and to support family members.

Home was also seen to be both a cocoon and support structure in older age. When asked whether they would consider moving to purpose built aged housing, most indicated that they would only do so if, a) their partner died (if the interviewee was a woman), b) their health deteriorated, or c) age, disability and poor access to services meant that life became too difficult. Very few people moved to retirement villages or aged accommodation in their late 50s or early 60s.

Of the 95 persons in our survey of 1,200 (7.9 per cent of respondents) living in purpose built retirement housing at the time of the survey, only around 20 per cent had moved into this type of housing prior to the age of 65 with the peak age range for entry being 70-74. The fact that home is a cocoon in older age is very important for a society that is ageing rapidly and where the incidence of disability is increasing (Mathers 2007, p.59). ***Our future housing stock must acknowledge the role appropriate housing plays in both maintaining independence in later life and enhancing quality of life.***

These new attitudes to retirement housing are a reflection of the times within which we live. Many older people are now entering retirement and later life with greater financial resources – and expectations – than previous generations. This is a function of increased female participation in the labour force since the 1970s, escalating house price values through the 1990s and 2000s (and thus far relatively unaffected by the global financial crisis in Australia unlike in some other developed nations) and near universal access to superannuation for those in the workforce. The latter point is important, because while the Superannuation Guarantee Levy has only been in effect since the 1990s, and many older South Australians have limited superannuation, **there is an enormous difference with respect to housing and lifestyle options between people who have some superannuation and people who have no superannuation.** Compulsory superannuation has ensured that a greater number of older people have a choice in terms of home and living arrangements. At the same time, not all older people have had access to superannuation to any significant degree or at all: persons who have not been in the paid workforce, or who left the labour market soon after the introduction of the Superannuation Guarantee Levy have not had an opportunity to build substantial retirement savings. This group are retired at a time when other retirees have substantial assets and resources and those with few resources run the risk of being overlooked by private sector providers and in the formation of government policy. In short, this group is confronted by the risk of greater inequality and therefore more acute disadvantage.

### **Hotel California**

In the 1970s song, *Hotel California* was a place you could enter but never leave. A minority of older South Australians have a comparable set of attitudes to their housing in older age: once they leave work they wish to move to a retirement village which provides substantial facilities – a bowling green, a pool, a barbeque area – and where persons under aged 45 years are neither seen nor heard, unless they are grandchildren. Even then they are experienced in small and unobtrusive numbers and for a short period of time.

Approximately 10 per cent of older South Australians ascribed to this set of views. They are not interested in engagement with the broader community nor do they necessarily value access to broader community services. Larger retirement villages are preferred because they deliver a greater range of services and a larger community of like minded people.

Conventional retirement villages suit this group and highlight the ongoing demand for this form of housing. Importantly, **most people we interviewed who lived in retirement villages reported very high levels of satisfaction with both their accommodation and their community setting.**

This is a very positive outcome. However, **the majority** of older people in South Australia **are not attracted to this option** and there is therefore a need for a diversity of housing types and arrangements.

## ***We Will Make Do***

Not all older South Australians have benefitted from the past two decades of economic prosperity. Some have limited financial resources because of advanced age, others were never in the workforce and have therefore not benefited from either superannuation or income growth. Others have remained tenants all their lives, while a final group may have been home owners at some stage in their lives, but fell out of home ownership because of divorce, separation or other circumstances.

***For this group, housing in older age is a matter of 'making do'.*** For many the homes in which they live now may no longer be appropriate but they are the only available option. This may mean staying in the home they own for as long as possible, or remaining in public rental housing. A minority live in private rental housing and their housing options are extremely limited as the high cost of private rental housing, low quality of much of that stock and the precariousness of their tenure erodes both their sense of security and their financial resources. ***For many older private tenants, early entry into residential care is an attractive option.***

The attachment to remaining in the family home is not limited to persons on low incomes and limited assets, but importantly this group often has no other options in the later years of life. In part this reflects a failure in the provision of retirement housing, as conventional retirement villages are seen to be too expensive, are perceived to be poor value for money and may offer a lifestyle that does not meet the needs of all people. Alternative forms of aged housing, such as ILUs, are attractive for some, but access is limited, many are unaware of this option and much of the housing stock is now dated, and therefore unappealing. Interestingly, the research found that many low income home owners were committed to leaving a legacy to their children and other relatives and were therefore unwilling to trade the family home for more appropriate aged housing.

## **Low Income Households**

One of the most important findings of this body of research is that despite some differences in the characteristics of people on a low to middle income when compared to the population as a whole, the housing aspirations and expectations of older age South Australians remain largely the same irrespective of income level. Specifically, the research (Raftery, Beer and Faulkner 2007) found that:

- the average age of people with a low to modest income is higher than for the respondent population as a whole;
- older people with a low to modest income are most likely married or widowed and living alone or with one other person;
- while the majority of respondents live in a separate house, a slightly higher number of low income respondents (17.2 per cent) live in flats, units or apartments than respondents overall;
- low to modest income respondents are slightly more likely to be renting their current home (12.3 per cent) than respondents overall;
- the health of low income respondents is marginally poorer than respondents overall and this is reflected in a slight increase in the interference of health in normal daily activities;

- similar to respondents overall, 14.7 per cent of low to modest income respondents share their home with someone who has a health issue or disability, and almost 10 per cent live in a household where care and assistance is regularly provided by one household member to another;
- low to modest income participants were more likely than respondents overall to be retired (84.9 per cent), and much more likely to have a partner who was not in the workforce;
- half of the low to modest income respondents have an income between \$13,000 and \$25,999, and another fifth report their income as being below \$12,999;
- although salary and wages form the main source of income for the majority of low to modest income respondents who are still attached to the workforce, government pensions or allowances are the main source of income for one quarter of this group;
- half of the low to modest income respondents yet to retire expect that their main source of income in retirement will be a government pension, double the number of respondents overall who believe this will be the case;
- almost two thirds of low to modest income respondents who have retired rely on some form of government pension as their main source of income (compared to half of retired respondents overall);
- low to modest income respondents have fewer assets than respondents overall. Almost two thirds have homes valued between \$150,000 and \$399,000, and half have accumulated less than \$49,999 in other assets;
- over one third of low to modest income retirees believe they did not sufficiently prepare for their retirement; and,
- as with respondents overall, the level of mobility among low to modest income respondents is low. Thirteen per cent have moved home in the past five years (and most of them only once), and nine per cent envisage moving in the next three years. Comfort and location are the main reasons for wanting to remain in their current home.

The data on ***the housing aspirations of low to modest income older South Australians presents a dilemma for the community generally, the retirement housing industry and governments*** because while their aspirations and hopes for their housing match those of the older population as a whole, they have relatively few resources and virtually no capacity to acquire additional resources. The challenge is to meet their housing needs and support them as they age in place, and to do so in a way that is sustainable socially and economically.

### 3. The Housing Stock

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What is it that older South Australians seek in their housing? Are older South Australians content with conventional aged housing or are they looking for new, more radical housing types? Are they committed to detached housing or do they seek apartment style dwellings, terraces or town houses?



When asked in focus groups and in the large scale survey significant themes emerged with respect to the features sought in retirement housing. These included:

- physical security;
- parking for gophers, caravans and both internal and external storage;
- the capacity to secure their dwelling as they travel nationally or internationally for several months;
- fewer, larger rooms;
- a second bedroom for hobbies, grandchildren and visitors; and,
- limited community infrastructure such as a common or community hall.

Our research found that there were significant differences between persons living in purpose built aged housing and the general community with respect to the features they would seek if relocating. Low maintenance, internal layout, privacy, personal security and a garage were the most important features considered by current residents of purpose built housing, while energy efficiency, low maintenance, privacy and accessibility were the features that non-residents of purpose built housing believed to be most important.

The desire for privacy and independence was an important theme in discussions with older people about the features they sought in their housing. This issue was examined in considerable depth and we found that participants in the focus groups and in depth interviews had a clearly developed sense of privacy.

**They considered privacy to include both issues of oversight and having a private backyard.** There was a strong consensus that properties need to have side and rear fences, but not front fences. Front fences were seen to impede casual surveillance and reduce neighbourliness. Rear and side fences were seen to be a necessary security feature. The participants also wanted some private space at the rear of their home that was low maintenance. Privacy was also expressed in terms of the distance between dwellings, with most participants wanting dwellings separated by at least a garage or carport.

Personal security was a second issue highlighted by older South Australians when discussing the housing features they sought. For this group, a sense of personal security found expression in the desire for alarm systems, lockable windows and security screens. **Personal security was largely expressed in terms of freedom from assault** rather than the provision of support in the face of a health threat or other emergency. It is worth noting, for example, that there was very little desire for 24 hour monitoring of the property.

Finally, many participants in our research reported that they sought 'good design' in their housing, but what constitutes 'good design' or 'improved layout' for this group? Based on the evidence from the focus groups and in-depth interviews, improved layout means intelligent design that maximises the use of space and results in small dwellings that have a spacious feel and ambience. Key features include:

- large bedrooms;
- open plan design (tied to efficient insulation);
- direct access to the garage/carport from the house;
- the clustering of wet areas;
- dual access bathrooms;
- not having visitors walk through the bedroom to enter the bathroom;
- two bedrooms;
- well integrated lounge/kitchen areas; and,
- kitchens of adequate size.

## **Where is Home?**

In the 20th Century older age was a period of relative immobility for many households in their older age. Conventional attitudes drove people to move home in the first half of their lives as they sought education, looked for work and experienced career changes. Older age, by contrast, was seen to be a period of residential stability with few households relocating. It is estimated three to five per cent of the older age population move to a retirement village or other purpose built housing (Stimson and McCrea 2004). There is, however, expectations that increasing numbers of older Australians will move to retirement villages (Stimson 2002) and at the same time, more older people are moving to attractive coastal and rural localities. The location of 'home' therefore is changing.

The participants in the inner suburbs focus group had a strong preference for centrally located housing. A number of the participants in this focus group looked for apartment style living options, failing that, medium density housing in the inner city or the surrounding inner suburbs areas was considered attractive. This outcome raises a challenge for governments, the retirement housing industry and society as a whole, as it suggests that the housing preferences of at least some older South Australians are changing and that there is a need for experimentation in the supply of purpose built aged housing. Conventional styles and location for purpose built aged housing will not meet the needs of all older South Australians:

- a newly constructed apartment block within walking distance to the Adelaide Central Markets;
- retirement housing that is fully integrated with the broader community;
- access to services as needed, including pre-prepared meals;
- two or three bedrooms;
- secure and with a balcony;
- an inner city location that enables walking to services and shopping;
- ADSL 2+ connection to broadband;
- eco-apartments would be desirable;
- natural light;
- filtered water;
- storage space for push bikes or suitcases;
- largish lounge rooms for entertainment; and,
- a sense of spaciousness.

One participant – a male living alone – indicated that he would be happy moving to a one bedroom apartment but most felt **they wanted at least two bedrooms**. Within this group, many participants felt that environmental sustainability was important and felt that their housing should accommodate recycling and where possible be built with environmentally friendly materials and technology.

The overwhelming majority of people who participated in our study wanted to live in the neighbourhoods and communities in which they had spent most of their adult lives. Many recognized that their current housing was either not appropriate or suitable for ageing in place, but wanted accommodation that allowed them to maintain their social networks and remain close to the services and facilities with which they were familiar. There is, of course, a significant 'seachange/treechange' evident amongst Australia's population (Gurran, Squires and Blakely 2005) and while older Australians are important participants in this process, the majority do not aspire to this lifestyle shift, and those who do may well be in transit to other forms of accommodation. While Baby Boomers express a wish to move to such locations, currently they are not the population that is moving into purpose built aged accommodation. The older population (aged 70 and onwards) that moves into purpose built aged housing is more concerned about access to health and other services than with rural or ocean views.

We interviewed a number of older people who left Adelaide for the coast as soon as they retired, only to return five or so years later when access to doctors and specialist facilities emerged as an important priority in their lives. We believe that the difference in attitudes between those aged 55-64 and older cohorts reflects an ageing process rather than a durable shift in attitudes amongst the 'young old'.

We conclude, therefore, ***that in the 21st Century, 'home' for the largest portion of the older population is located close to where people have lived their adult lives and where friendship networks are established, services are known and community links deeply rooted.***

The research shows that for some households ***attitudes to family are changing and that this is affecting both where older people live and the types of housing they seek.*** In both the focus groups and surveys a significant number of older South Australians acknowledged that they did not seek a location close to their children or grandchildren when choosing retirement housing because they recognised their family members were likely to relocate because of the demands of their careers. Many noted that other friends had relocated to be close to their children, only to find that they were left behind when their offspring moved in order to secure a promotion or other opportunity. Importantly, a growing percentage of households willing to move in older age relocated to places where they believed there was an active and supportive community. Family remained important but many older people recognised that they could not rely upon them for day-to-day social interaction and support. For this group, home is where the community is active, supportive and dynamic. One of our respondents living in Kadina noted that it is 'very hard work being retired as you can't take sickies'. Community is a full-time commitment, and participation in community life enriches the experience of home for older South Australians, especially when day-to-day contact with family members is impractical.

Many older people attracted to purpose built aged housing are deterred by the prospect of living in a large retirement village. As noted above, some older Australians adhere to a 'Hotel California' philosophy of ageing, but they are a minority. A significant percentage of older South Australians expressed ***a preference for purpose built aged housing that was provided in a community setting, usually individual units in small clusters of up to ten dwellings*** that would provide social support but not isolate the older population from the community at large. Our research found that 37 per cent of older South Australians would prefer to live in homes in clusters of ten or fewer dwellings, while 62 per cent considered clusters of fewer than 20 dwellings to be ideal. This type of housing, if both affordable and built to a high standard, was seen to offer the best of all worlds: good quality housing, minimal or zero maintenance obligations, social connectedness with both peers and the broader community; and the capacity to remain within the neighbourhood or community with which they are familiar.

Location and accessibility were seen to be key elements of home for many older South Australians. Often in interviews or focus groups persons participating in the research would highlight the desire to live in an 'accessible' location and this issue was explored in some considerable depth over the course of the studies. **The research found that the ability to get to public transport via a short walk is the 'deal breaker/deal maker' for most older people.**

In most instances it is sufficient to have a bus stop with good connections to other transport within a short distance of the purpose built aged housing. The second priority would be access to a post office (preferably within walking distance), followed by the ability to get to a GP via a short drive and then access to a local supermarket and a local hairdresser, preferably by a short walk (or gopher ride).

## 4. Housing and Services

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When asked about the range of services they would like to have associated with purpose built aged housing, older South Australians listed a range of desires:



- services needed to be affordable, and critically older South Australians would seek fewer services in order to secure lower cost housing or maintenance fees;
- a dining room/community hall and meals;
- a barbeque area for entertaining and/or informal gatherings;
- access to a library;
- access to specialist services including transport to Adelaide for those living outside the metropolitan area. Access to one or more nursing homes was important to couples who may be at risk of forced separation;
- village security which was seen to be important for home security while occupants are travelling; and,
- a 24 hour call service.

Relatively few older South Australians (less than ten per cent) live in retirement villages and therefore the majority of participants in our research lived in their family home or other community setting. Very few older South Australians expressed a desire for many of the services associated with retirement villages, especially those at the 'top end' of the market. There was no evident demand for swimming pools, bowling greens, restaurants or other high end services. If given a choice, the **overwhelming majority of respondents would choose less expensive housing with fewer services over housing of a comparable standard but with a higher cost because of a greater range of services.**

Throughout the various phases of the research some types of services were discussed with considerable frequency, and this included libraries, community halls and entertainment areas. In order to better understand the priority attached to access to such services we attempted to place a separate price on community facilities (hedonic pricing) by asking focus group participants to indicate what they would be willing to pay in order to secure these services. Instead, participants in the research felt that such services should be built into the purchase/entry cost of the property and if the entire package was attractive they would enter that accommodation. At the same time many participants were extremely price sensitive with respect to their housing decisions. There is a contradiction evident here: older South Australians want access to services but are unwilling to pay for them as separate expenditures, but are willing to have them included in the capital cost of their property. If the dwelling is seen to be too expensive, however, they will not make a purchase. This set of attitudes clearly creates significant challenges for the retirement housing industry and we would suggest that the most productive strategy would be to build villages with minimal facilities on-site, (with others accessible off-site) but perhaps construct such housing in places with more facilities, even if land prices result in higher purchase costs overall.

Not all services are awarded equal priority by older South Australians and it is important to ask what are the most important services individuals and households seek in retirement living. Our research found that ***the most important services*** individuals seek in retirement living are: **first, a social club or other organised activities; second, a community hall; third a hairdresser on site.** These were the only services that attracted uniform support across the focus groups in metropolitan and regional South Australia. Access to a community bus would stand in fourth rank across the groups but was not universally supported. Other services such as a visiting doctor, a visiting podiatrist, a swimming pool, bowling green or library attracted lesser support and should not be awarded priority.

Older South Australians exhibited open attitudes when asked whether care or support services needed to be provided by the provider of purpose built aged housing or offered by a third party with access to such services facilitated for them. The overwhelming majority of participants in our in-depth interviews and focus groups were happy to have services provided away from their place of living and several respondents who lived in retirement housing noted that most villages rely upon such models. The supply of ***aged housing, therefore, does not need to be tied to the provision of services, but such matters need to be considered and planned.*** Severing the ties between housing and services may have considerable benefits to residents – who benefit from greater choice, better pricing – and providers who are freed from the expectation to provide and maintain a full range of services.

Currently frail older South Australians generally have limited access to in home support (such as through the Home and Community Care program), with intensive support provided through residential care facilities. There are, however, some alternatives to these facilities, with serviced apartments and other housing forms able to provide a level of care not available in conventional aged housing, but at the same time they allow for a greater level of independence and self management. It is important to ask whether such strategies for the provision of support are acceptable or attractive to the older population.

Our research found that there were two sets of responses to this question: one group – the larger – were reluctant to discuss serviced apartment/unit models because they were concerned about the potential cost and believed they would not be able to afford this form of housing.

The second group considered this to be an attractive option, with a particular focus on the capacity to have meals delivered, as well as other services. That said, there was a very limited understanding of what this option may entail as few – if any – of the participants had knowledge of this type of housing and as noted throughout the report, people’s understanding of retirement housing was almost exclusively based on what they had seen or had been told by friends. A second and associated question relates to the necessity for co-location of residential facilities (hostels and nursing homes) with purpose built aged housing? In this instance our research found that once again the respondents were divided into two groups. Approximately half would not want to move to a retirement village that included a nursing home as they would find it dispiriting (‘God’s waiting room’) while the other half felt that it was an excellent idea and meant that friends in the retirement village could continue to visit if you were in the nursing home. Men were more likely to subscribe to the former view and women the latter perspective. This gender breakdown is significant given the reluctance of men to enter retirement villages at all.

Our research found some differences in attitudes to, and the use of, services amongst low to modest income older persons compared with the population of older persons overall:

- when available, unit maintenance, a community hall, a restaurant or dining room and organised activities were the retirement housing/village services and facilities most frequently used by purpose built housing residents, regardless of income level. Low to modest income respondents, however, tended to use the restaurant or dining room and participate in organised activities slightly less often than respondents overall;
- restaurants, cafés or hotels, libraries and organised community activities are the most popular community based services and facilities utilised by low to modest income residents of purpose built housing;
- being close to shops and services and in a familiar neighbourhood were influential factors for all residents in choosing their retirement housing. Low to modest income residents, however, were more likely to choose housing in a country location and less likely to choose housing closer to the city than residents overall;
- as with residents overall, low to modest income residents of retirement housing are most willing to pay for social outings, health care services and the hairdresser;

The services and facilities offered with purpose built aged housing are important considerations for low to modest income South Australians, and as such housing and service providers and governments alike should be mindful of the fact that amongst **the low to modest income group there is a tendency to wait for services to be provided by the government rather than to organise and pay for them themselves**. An organisation that provides such services – or facilitates access to this assistance - when needed would be attractive to this market. Indeed, a fifth of all survey respondents expect that housing providers will make such services available.

Providing assistance with accessing the services of outside agencies is also highly valued by older people. The ability to gain access to services in later life was an important theme throughout the series of studies embedded within the program of research summarised here. Participants felt that purpose built aged housing needed to ensure that residents had access to a good range of services. For this reason, some participants in the research were attracted to retirement villages that were large, but not too large, and as one focus group member put it '150 is a good whack' as larger villages were seen to offer a greater range of facilities.

Older South Australians do not necessarily expect to gain access to services through a retirement village or similar set of arrangements. One of the focus groups included in our research was undertaken on the upper Yorke Peninsula and the study group members reported that they chose to retire to the Copper Coast because of time spent in the area earlier in their life or because it was where their friends had moved. One person bought a block of land to store their boat and eventually ended up building a home on the block. Access to services, however, was an important part of the retirement equation. The group felt they would be able to maintain their lifestyle in this area because of the excellent range of services available to them.

Such services included:

- easy availability of medical care (particularly Monday to Friday);
- an outreach service available from Wallaroo Hospital;
- residential care facilities in Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta;
- a good Home and Community Care network;
- Meals on Wheels;
- fitness centre facilities;
- assessment of modifications needed in a home for people aged 75 years and over provided by Northern Yorke Health.

Some of the participants in this focus group lived within a retirement village and pendant alarms were part of the maintenance package and they were seen to be an important asset. For this group internet access was critical as it was seen to be a means to gather information, keep the grandchildren amused and provide eBay access. Many respondents across our studies highlighted both the need for internet access and the importance of living in housing with dedicated space for a web-connected computer. In general, retirement villages fulfilled the lifestyle choices they desired – security when in the home or knowledge that home is secure when the resident is away on holidays as well as maintenance issues being attended to.

In Victor Harbor there was a clearly voiced preference amongst the focus group members (who were from towns across the South Coast) for smaller retirement villages with a number of facilities. A vocal group felt that any and every retirement village should include a small community hall that could be booked out for events – for example, as a dining room when relatives are visiting – as well as for playing cards and engaging in social activities on a daily basis. The group as a whole had mixed views about moving to retirement estates with greater levels of service provision.

There was discussion of one large-scale development – Seachange Village at Goolwa – that had 150-200 homes and an extensive range of services including a library, a games room, swimming pool, hairdressing, catering, podiatry etc. While many of the participants admired the facilities, they were wary of the extra costs that accompany such a high level of amenity. They were also critical of large retirement villages which they described as ‘too claustrophobic’.

## 5. Housing Models and Aspirations

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What models of housing do older South Australians aspire to and what are the drivers that push them towards one form of housing over another? Our research considered this issue in some depth in order to better understand both what encourages older people to move home and the organisational factors likely to influence their final choice of dwelling.



### Housing Models and Reputation

One of the key findings of this phase of our research is that the reputation of aged housing providers has a substantial influence on the attitudes and behaviours of older South Australians. **Moving to a new dwelling later in life is seen to be expensive and risky**, with many respondents commenting that they would not have the resources to move again once they had moved to a retirement village or equivalent purpose built housing.

For these reasons older South Australians seek:

- a provider with a good reputation, who is financially secure and has a good track record;
- an organisation that provides ongoing support in case it is needed in the future;
- a charity based organisation – religious or non-religious – as they are seen to have a better reputation and be less likely to impose unreasonable costs.

Marketing that highlights these characteristics is likely to be more successful in attracting new residents.

Many participants in the study were concerned about the financial structures commonly associated with purpose built aged housing – especially retirement villages: they simply did not understand – and did not trust – the financial arrangements associated with deferred management fees.

Many had had experience with such arrangements in managing the affairs of their parents or other older relatives and were concerned about the apparent high cost, the difficulty in calculating the eventual 'outlay' and the ambiguities associated with this tenure. The overwhelming **majority sought a tenure arrangement in retirement that either was, or closely emulated, freehold ownership**. Even those who did not desire to leave a legacy for their children wanted the freedom to withdraw their equity and perhaps move to other accommodation at a later stage. For others it was a matter of preserving equity in order to fund lifestyle aspirations or health needs.

Participants in the focus groups were unwilling to commit all of their capital to their housing.

They wished to

...maintain a large percentage to live life and do other things like travel.

While another participant said

"...you don't know how your health will be, you don't want to tie all your money up in housing."

Concern about financial arrangements has meant that many older South Australians – and especially those on low to modest incomes – have been attracted to ILUs where the resident pays a cash entry fee (a donation) and a modest weekly maintenance fee (\$72-\$78 per week) in exchange for a right to occupy. Such forms of housing are extremely popular with occupants but supply is limited because capital subsidies for such housing terminated in the 1980s. The 'donation' method of funding retirement housing was favoured because it was seen to produce good quality housing outcomes, with a limited drain on financial resources and resulted in funds left over for lifestyle aspirations – in particular travel. Members of the Victor Harbor focus group, for example, felt that it was important to have a variety of funding models available for retirement housing. Some of the better off participants felt that it would be desirable to have a larger stock of freehold purchase properties made available in Victor Harbor. Others realised that they could only afford the donation model and that while they might aspire to a two bedroom unit, it was important to maintain the one bedroom stock, as it was all they could afford. Clearly, financial models are one of the parameters older South Australians trade off as they seek retirement housing and some approaches are seen to be more attractive and beneficial than others.

Participants in the Riverland were asked about the donation model and as a group they had mixed views about the balance between capital costs and maintenance fees. While some would prefer a lower entry cost (donation) and a higher weekly maintenance fee (largely in the expectation of securing Commonwealth Rent Assistance), the majority preferred a higher entry fee and lower ongoing maintenance costs. Their preference reflected both a fear about the potential impact of inflation and a desire to minimize ongoing costs in order to better allow budgeting.

There were also commonalities in the attitudes of the study participants to the financing of retirement housing. Critically, **most felt that they were unwilling to commit all their capital to retirement housing** as they wanted to save a percentage to fund their lifestyle aspirations. This view was not held uniformly, but it was held by the majority. In addition, very few respondents desired to retain their capital in order to bequeath as much wealth as possible.

The major exception to this trend was the relatively poor respondents within Salisbury. While most respondents were not concerned to preserve their capital for any potential inheritors, they were eager to maintain their capital for their own use later in life. For some people, this concern made the donation model of retirement housing particularly attractive. Others, however, wanted freehold housing options. Either way, there appears to be an a priori case for investigating new funding models as part of the 'product mix' offered by aged housing providers.

Moderate and low income households differed slightly from the general population in their funding of retirement housing. Amongst our survey respondents over three quarters of the group who lived in purpose built housing sold their family home to fund the move. This figure was consistent with respondents overall, but highlights the 'lock in' this group experience when they move to purpose built retirement housing. Our research also showed a partly refundable entry fee or full market value were the most common payment options used by low to modest income residents of retirement housing, although almost one quarter paid no entry fee.

Amongst low to modest income households living within the general community 84 per cent would need to sell their family home in order to move to purpose built housing for older people. Amongst this group the preferred payment option involved no entry payment, with one quarter only able to pay rent. Paying full market value on the condition that most is refunded upon vacating the home was the next most favoured option for this group.

This discussion has implications for the community, government and housing providers as we seek to provide housing for older people with a low to moderate income. Firstly, in structuring payment options for entry into purpose built aged housing, it appears preferable to have a range of options. Consideration needs to be given to providing some housing on a low cost rental basis where no large upfront payment is required. This would enable people with few assets to access purpose built housing for older people and be the best option for the currently distressingly large – and growing – number of older people who are highly vulnerable within the private rental market. The option to pay full market value and have most of it refunded upon vacating the home would also appeal to a large number of persons with modest financial resources.

## **The Decision to Move to Retirement Housing**

Older South Australians move to purpose built aged housing for a number of reasons. Key triggers for a move to purpose built housing included:

- the death of a partner, especially if the surviving partner was a woman;
- declining health or increased disability. However, low income respondents were less likely than respondents with a moderate or high income to see loneliness or losing a spouse or partner as reasons for moving into retirement housing;
- an inability to 'cope' with a large house or meet the challenge of maintaining their property;
- lifestyle aspirations, perhaps associated with a 'seachange' to purpose built aged housing;
- in order to be with friends or relatives who already live within a retirement village;

- movement to a new region; and,
- as a consequence of a deliberate plan for retirement living.

It is important to acknowledge that very **few people make a conscious decision to move** to a retirement village or other purpose built aged housing. **The majority are pushed to change** as a consequence of circumstances beyond their control.

Many people do not expect to move to purpose built aged housing and half of the people not currently living in retirement housing envisage remaining in their current home, and making modifications to it if necessary. Critically, older people move to purpose built housing for diverse reasons, and this suggests that the aged housing sector needs to provide a range of dwelling types and styles in order to satisfy the span of motivations pushing individuals and households towards change.

In the Barossa focus group participants believed that retirement planning had come a long way since 1996. People expected to live longer and wanted to do more with their life, but attitudes to housing had changed relatively little. The belief that ‘government or family will look after me’ in old age was seen to be outdated. These focus group participants were aware of the growth in the range of services, information and help available to plan retirement over the last ten years, but felt many people still lack the information they need to make valuable decisions about retirement. The Kadina group felt that choosing the ‘right’ time to move is difficult, ‘we all leave it too long’ and that finances were important, ‘if you don’t have a house to sell you will be in trouble’. Some in the Riverland group had built their current housing as retirement housing to allow them to age in place for as long as possible. This was seen as an affordable form of planned retirement housing. For all participants in the research, their **health was seen as a major future limiting factor**, especially for couples, where if one partner needed high care, the other would have to follow or relocate nearby.

For the reasons discussed above, people tend to move into retirement housing relatively late in life, from their mid 70s onwards. This is an important insight because it should shape the type of purpose built aged housing being built, and how it is built. It could be suggested, for example, that in the future all newly-built aged housing needs to specifically address issues of disability and lifetime design.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that while relatively few older South Australians occupy purpose built aged housing, those that do are generally happy with their living arrangements. Retirement villages, ILUs and similar housing forms are well regarded by their residents who are much less likely to intend to move than persons living in the family home. Residents report a range of advantages including better quality and more frequent social interactions, reduced stress, better access to services, more appropriately sized housing and greater independence in the long term. **Purpose built aged housing is an accommodation form and model with much to offer the older population, but it is a model and an industry sector that needs to evolve** in order to better meet the needs of the contemporary generation of older people. The community as a whole has a role in this change process, as do governments, service providers and the older population generally.

## 6. Conclusion

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This program of research supported by ECH Inc has examined in considerable detail the housing aspirations and expectations of older South Australians. It has provided a wealth of information on how they live currently, what their resources are, what their aspirations are for their future housing, their attitudes to their neighbourhood and the services they expect they will require – and pay for – into the future. In many ways the research establishes an evidence base around retirement housing that can inform the actions of all aged housing providers, as well as local government, planners, the retirement industry, State and Federal Governments.



This publication has brought together a raft of new insights into the housing aspirations and expectations of older age cohorts in South Australia, as well as ideas around the housing market behaviour of persons older than 55 years of age. Importantly, the research suggests that the purpose built aged housing market will change in South Australia as the Baby Boomer generation ages and as they bring greater assets into their retirement. The research has documented a number of areas where Baby Boomers currently express attitudes and opinions that are at odds with established social values amongst older people. It is our assessment, however, that many of these differences will become less evident as they age. For example, Baby Boomers express strong sentiments that favour ‘seachange’ living, but we anticipate that such values will not be as evident around the age of 75 and older when they are most likely to move into purpose built aged housing. It is evident throughout the report also that older South Australians often fail to consider their housing needs as they age and many express an attitude that they ‘want to stay where they are’. This attitude appears to become more entrenched as they age at home.

The work reported here highlights the high level of risk confronting many older South Australians as the overwhelming majority of older people reported that they held very modest assets and very limited incomes.

Some 53 per cent of those we surveyed aged 55 to 64 had assets – excluding the value of any homes they owned - valued at less than \$200,000; while 71 per cent of the 65 to 74 year group had assets worth less than \$200,000; and, fully 82 per cent of those aged over 75 years reported assets below this threshold. Critically, those older South Australians who do not own a home are therefore unlikely to have significant other assets and would have limited opportunities to purchase purpose built aged housing or purchase additional support services in older age. In addition, those older South Australians who own a home are dependent upon this single asset class and may be reluctant to move to more appropriate housing because of the perception of a risk to their asset.

One way of drawing this material together is to consider what constitutes ‘best practice’ in purpose built aged housing development given what we have learnt through this data collection process. The evidence presented through this report suggests that aged housing developments that are likely to ‘fit’ with the expectations, aspirations and preferences of older South Australians are likely to have the following characteristics:

- contain groups of ten or fewer single storey dwellings that, in the main, have two bedrooms. Each development would also include some three bedroom units for persons who seek a tenure arrangement similar to outright ownership. They would also include one bedroom units for the rental market as the data suggests those with lower assets are more willing to accept a single bedroom home;
- be located throughout metropolitan and regional areas so that people have the opportunity to move to purpose built aged housing that is part of their neighbourhood;
- provide limited services, focussing on maintenance of the property and grounds, and personal security. They should not provide a swimming pool or similar sporting facilities because, while the prospect of such services are attractive to Baby Boomers, they are not attractive to prospective older purchasers nor current occupants of purpose built aged housing;
- assist, and be seen to assist, people to maintain an independent lifestyle. The site would also be close to public transport, shops and other facilities, and facilitate access to health services;
- be aimed at older people generally – but mindful of the needs of lower income persons in particular – and would offer a range of tenure and pricing arrangements including rental, outright purchase, a ‘donation model’ and other variants. The data from this program of research shows that most older South Australians are willing to sell their home in order to secure purpose built aged housing and importantly, those aged 55-64 have greater assets than earlier generations had at the same stage in their life cycle. This is likely to translate into greater purchasing power in the housing market;
- pay attention to the issue of access to care services, which is a critical factor in the decision of many who move to purpose built aged housing;
- should involve an established participant in the industry, with a good reputation and one which commands a perception of financial stability;

Developments should focus on persons in and around their early to mid 70s as they are the group most receptive to the idea of purpose built aged housing and perhaps best positioned to take up these opportunities

This research highlights that the **housing and retirement industry needs to listen to the voices of older South Australians**. There is a need to develop new financial and building models that better meet the needs of people in later life. In this regard, providers need to be innovative and think beyond current models of provision and take advantage of new approaches and opportunities.

The role of providing adequate and appropriate housing for our older population is not just the responsibility of the housing industry. Governments have a role in reforming planning schedules to allow the dispersed provision of aged housing in order to ensure that older South Australians can remain in the communities they value and love. Governments also need to ensure the adequate provision of services and this may require new paradigms for funding, as often expenditures in one area of government deliver savings for the other areas. **A more mature policy framework is therefore necessary** to take account of these interactions and deliver better outcomes for all older South Australians.

Finally, there is a need for governments, the aged housing industry and society in its entirety to acknowledge both change amongst the older population and the continuity of key trends. It is important to develop explicit strategies to address the housing needs of low and modest income households. Older tenants are particularly vulnerable in the housing market and the ongoing demands placed on conventional public housing may mean that this form of housing assistance will become more difficult to access in the future. Older South Australians of low and moderate means have the same expectations and aspirations for suitable and appropriate housing as the broader aged population – they simply lack the means to achieve their ambitions. The challenge for communities is to help them realise these goals and secure affordable appropriate housing that delivers both support and independence.



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